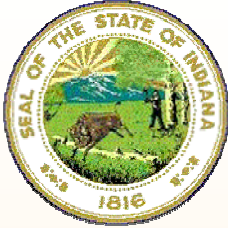


# SENATOR EARLINE ROGERS

## SENATE MINORITY ASSISTANT LEADER



### RESIDENCE

3636 W. 15th Street  
Gary, IN 46404  
219-949-7578

### STATE CAPITOL

200 W. Washington St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
800-382-9467  
317-232-9491

### ONLINE

S3@IN.gov  
www.IN.gov/S3

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*Dear Friends:*

*The first regular session of the 114<sup>th</sup> Indiana General Assembly contained both accomplishments and disappointments for all Hoosiers. The most important issue considered this year was the establishment of a new state budget for the next two years. Contained in House Enrolled Act 1001, the \$24.3 billion appropriations plan will purportedly balance the state's budget without increasing any statewide taxes. However, my greatest concern is that the plan balances the state budget at a very high cost to public schools around the state.*

*I voted against this budget because it cuts funding to 142 school corporations across the state, while it potentially raises local property taxes statewide by as much as \$850 million. In addition, it places a freeze on state property tax relief.*

*Under the budget's new school funding formula, only one percent of additional funding is provided for schools in the first year of the biennium and 1.1 percent in the second. This is well short of the 2.75 percent schools will need to keep up with inflation and the costs associated with enrollment growth.*

*This budget and school funding formula will mean laying off thousands of teachers, larger class sizes, fewer opportunities for expanded curriculums and less of a chance for our public schools to cope with the burden of unfunded state and federal mandates that are continually placed on them.*

*The budget also fails to adequately fund state universities, which in turn will cause tuition costs to rise. It underfunds the projected growth in Medicaid costs and reduces funding dedicated to local communities for road improvements.*

*Although I was very disappointed with the outcome of the state budget, several important initiatives were enacted and are discussed inside this newsletter. If I can provide you with more information on issues considered by the legislature or assist you with problems or concerns you have relating to state government, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Earline Rogers*

## Regional development

One of my most important accomplishments this session was the creation of the **Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (NIRDA)**. As a lead negotiator on the plan, I had the pleasure of working with Congressman Viscloskey and Governor Daniels in efforts to secure state and federal funding for this vital initiative.

The NIRDA will help to create a unified transportation system for Lake and Porter counties. Included in **HEA 1120**, the authority will focus on the development and funding for the expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport, extension of the area's commuter rail system and implementation of a coordinated bus system throughout the region. Plans also include shoreline and economic development projects capable of producing tremendous growth and thousands of job opportunities.

## In the classroom

This session, I co-authored legislation that will better prepare students to meet the challenges of the future. Helping students to achieve higher goals is the impetus behind **SEA 200**.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, this act will require all students entering high school to take the Core 40 curriculum. Core 40 includes additional math and science courses that will be required for a student to be admitted to a state-operated four-year college.

Students would be permitted to opt out of Core 40 with parental permission and be eligible to obtain a general diploma.

Maintaining a safe and productive environment in

schools is addressed under another one of my initiatives, **SEA 285**. This act targets a serious issue many students face on a daily basis—bullying. Studies indicate that 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by a bully.

Studies also show that bullying behavior contributes to lower attendance rates, lower student achievement, low self-esteem, depression, and higher rates of both juvenile and adult crime.

The bill requires that all Indiana school corporations establish safe-school committees and provides training opportunities to learn how to prevent and intervene in bullying situations.



## At the polls

### *Changes to Indiana's election laws*

Several changes were made to Indiana's election laws that will be in effect for the next election in May 2006.

More restrictions on absentee voting have been put in place under **SEA 15**. The bill provides that when applying for an absentee ballot, voters will have to state the specific reason for voting absentee and have a reasonable expectation of being unable to vote during the entire twelve hours the polls are open.

Under **SEA 483**, voters will now be required to show government-issued photo identification to be allowed to vote. If a voter cannot produce identification at the polls, they may vote a provisional ballot, which is a ballot that is set aside and may be counted as long as proper procedures are followed. To have the provisional ballot counted, the voter must appear before the county election board before the Monday following the election and present proper identification. If the voter does not have an accepted photo ID because the voter is indigent, the voter can sign a document attesting to this and have their ballot counted. However, if the voter does not provide the appropriate documentation to the county election board, the provisional ballot will not be accepted. The ID requirement is waived for nursing home residents who vote at a polling place within the nursing home.

**Valid identification includes a state issued drivers license, an ID card issued to those who do not drive, a passport or a military identification. No alternative forms of ID will be accepted.**

**SEA 483** also requires the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to provide a free ID card to an individual who does not have a drivers license and will be 18 years old by the next election. **HEA 1407** requires all full-service license branches to be open on the day before an election and on election day to issue drivers licenses and ID cards to ensure voters are able to obtain proper identification.

Under **SEA 419**, military and overseas voters will be able to email their ballots through a program being administered by the U.S. Department of Defense. These voters will also be able to submit a single application by fax that would serve as both voter registration and an absentee ballot application.

## Protecting our families

### *Legislation to help Hoosiers stay safe*



The General Assembly enacted several bills this year that will help to protect Hoosier families. **SEA 12** creates the “Code Adam” alert program. Named after Adam Walsh who was murdered following his abduction from a shopping mall in

1981, this act requires the establishment of an alert system to locate a missing child in a state facility.

**SEA 230** adds registered neighborhood associations to the list of organizations that must periodically receive the sex and violent offender directory published by the Criminal Justice Institute.

**SEA 538** requires the state to improve its lead poisoning reporting, monitoring and preventive procedures. The legislation creates new measures to better evaluate Medicaid’s screening of children for lead poisoning. The State Board

of Health will adopt rules for case management of children with lead poisoning and to coordinate lead poisoning outreach programs with social service organizations.

**SEA 444** targets Indiana’s growing methamphetamine problem which is the fastest growing drug threat in the country. The damage caused by the abuse of this drug affects families, neighborhoods, schools and the environment.

The act will make it more difficult for users to obtain necessary ingredients to “cook” the drug by restricting the sale of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine products found in cold medicines. Customers will be required to provide a photo ID and signature upon purchase and the act limits the amount of products consumers can purchase.

*Meth is an especially difficult drug to combat as nearly every ingredient can be bought at your average retail store.*

## Rogers’ initiatives become law

Several of my key initiatives have been signed into law. I was very happy to work on the establishment of the **Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority** discussed at length under “*Regional development*” on Page 2.

Two of my bills regarding **education issues**, **SEA 200** and **SEA 285**, are reviewed under “*In the classroom*” on Page 2. In addition, I helped to develop legislation that will allow more five year olds to attend kindergarten. Beginning in 2006, children who are age five on or before August 1 will be eligible to enroll in kindergarten.

I was successful in enacting legislation to allow a county to adopt an ordinance that will **provide a property tax credit** for apartments, residential rental units and homes for the amount of property taxes due which exceed 2% of the gross assessed value. This will result in a continuation of the “circuit breaker” that has helped keep property taxes in check in Lake County. County government will not be allowed to raise property taxes in pay for the 2% circuit breaker. Instead, the county must finance the circuit breaker through other sources, such as gaming revenue or consider cuts in operational costs.

### **DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME**

The General Assembly approved a bill requiring all of Indiana to observe Daylight Saving Time. Lake County will continue to observe DST, but will now be an hour behind Indianapolis year round.

The U.S. Dept. of Transportation has been petitioned to review Indiana’s time zones and requests that Lake County continue to observe the Central Time Zone (Chicago).



*Senator Rogers speaks with a student on the Senate Floor.*

A few of my other bills that became law include:

- ★ **SEA 56** establishes the State Department of Homeland Security.
- ★ **SEA 304** exempts spouses and children of the Indiana National Guard who are killed while on active duty from payment of tuition and other mandatory fees at the state’s colleges and universities.
- ★ **SEA 539** requires the Talking Books and Braille Division of the State Library to work with a qualified entity to provide information in an electronic format to blind and disabled persons.





**State Senator Earline Rogers**  
 200 West Washington Street  
 Indianapolis, IN 46204-2785  
 Toll-free: 800-382-9467  
 E-mail: S3@IN.gov

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 State Information TDD 800-743-3333  
 Indiana Senate 800-382-9467  
 Governor's Office 317-232-4567

### Human Services

Adult Protective Services 800-992-6978  
 Child Protective Services 800-562-2407  
 Victim Assistance Hotline 800-258-0993  
 Consumer Protection 800-382-5516  
 No Call List 888-834-9969  
 Gary WorkOne 219-981-1520

### Community Action Agency

(Coordinates energy, housing & other assistance for low-income Hoosiers)

Northwest Indiana Community Action 219-937-3500

### Area Agency on Aging

(Provides case management, information & referral services for persons who are aging or developmentally disabled)

Northwest Indiana Community Action 219-937-3500

### Health

Senior Health Insurance Help 800-452-4800  
 Long Term Care Complaints 800-246-8909  
 Family Health Helpline 800-433-0746  
 Medicaid Hotline 800-457-4584  
 Medicare Hotline 800-633-4227

### Online Services

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[www.in.gov/bmv/bmvexpress/](http://www.in.gov/bmv/bmvexpress/)

#### Assistance with prescription drugs

[www.in.gov/fssa/hoosierrx/](http://www.in.gov/fssa/hoosierrx/)

[www.rxforindiana.org/](http://www.rxforindiana.org/)

#### Search college grant and award information

[www.in.gov/ssaci/](http://www.in.gov/ssaci/)

#### Get state forms

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#### Business assistance

[www.Biz.IN.gov](http://www.Biz.IN.gov)

#### Get hunting, trapping and fishing licenses

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